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Voices
from the
Gaps

Cristina García

“

The thing I hate most in the Cuban context is this attempt to limit what it means to be Cuban. Not too long ago at a reading I gave in Puerto Rico, a man stood up and said, “You can’t be Cuban because you write in English.” The point for me is that there is no one Cuban exile. I am out here in California and may not fit in anywhere, but I am Cuban too. I think I am trying to stake out a broader territory.

— At Home on the Page

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Biography

Cristina García has been hailed as one of the most important Cuban American voices in U.S. literature. García was born July 4, 1958 in Havana, Cuba, but moved to New York City with her parents in 1961 after Fidel Castro came to power. She grew up in Queens, Brooklyn Heights, and Manhattan. After a largely Catholic education, she completed in 1979 a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science at Barnard College. She credits her only English course at Barnard with awakening a strong love of literature (Kevane and Heredia 71), which continued to grow throughout the course of her graduate work. She graduated from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in 1981 with a Master’s degree in International Relations. During her graduate studies, she spent a year in Italy and planned to join the Foreign Service after graduation. Instead, she returned to Europe for her first job, a marketing position with Proctor and Gamble in West Germany, which she held for three months.

Quick Facts

- * Born in 1958
- * Moved from Cuba to the United States when she was three years old
- * Journalist and novelist

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Cristina García

Biography continued

Upon her return to the United States, she turned to a career in journalism. While at Johns Hopkins, García had held a part-time job as a “copy girl” at *The New York Times*, where she was introduced to the world of reporting. Remembering her work there, García interned at *The Boston Globe* for a short period of time and then took a job as a reporter for the Knoxville Journal in Tennessee. In 1983, she accepted a job with *Time Magazine* in New York, for whom she subsequently worked in San Francisco, Miami, and Los Angeles. In 1990, she left *Time* to write fiction full-time.

In 1992, García gave birth to her daughter, Pilar. She speaks Spanish to her daughter, believing in the importance of tradition. Although she did not grow up as part of a Latino/a or Cuban community, she says has “always thought of myself as Cuban” (Lupez 104). García grew up speaking Spanish at home and listening to family stories about Cuba, both of which gave her a strong sense of pride in her country of origin. She says that she sometimes has an uncomfortable relationship with Cubans, both on the island and in Miami because she has generally not engaged in anti-Castro activism. She believes strongly that “there is no one Cuban exile” (Kevane and Heredia 75), a theme which she seeks to emphasize in each of her novels as well as in her own life.

García published *Dreaming in Cuban*, which was nominated for the National Book Award, in 1992, followed by *The Aguero Sisters* in 1997 and *Monkey Hunting* in 2003. She has been a Guggenheim Fellow, and a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University, and is the recipient of the Whiting Writers Award.



Cristina García

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